

At a Glance

Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) Summary Report

January 2008

Background of Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

CDEPP is a pilot full-day educational pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds residing in the 37 plaintiff districts in the school funding lawsuit, *Abbeville County School District et al. vs. SC*. CDEPP was established in response to the ruling which directed the State to provide more resources to the plaintiff districts to meet the educational needs of young children in poverty.

Eligibility:

- Children residing in the plaintiff districts who attain the age of four years by September 1 and whose families meet the income requirements (Federal free- or reduced-price lunch program and/ or Medicaid).
- Public and private providers whose programs meet specific quality requirements, including student: teacher ratio, teacher qualifications, DSS licensing or approval, curriculum, and educational staff participation in professional development designed to meet the needs of at-risk young children.

Funding:

- In 2007-2008, \$3,931 per child, prorated based on length of time students participate in program; \$10,000 per new classroom grant for equipment and supplies; up to \$2,500 for consumable and other materials in existing classrooms ; transportation reimbursement of \$185 per child transported to participating school districts, \$550 per transported child for private providers.

Administration:

- Public school program is administered by South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).
- Private program is administered by Office of First Steps to School Readiness (OFS).

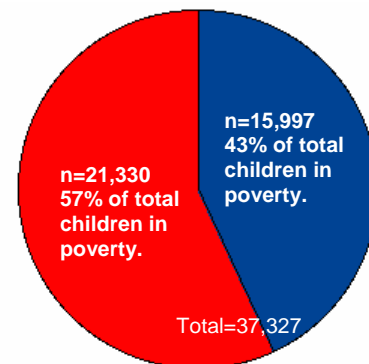
Evaluation:

- Conducted by Education Oversight Committee (EOC) in partnership with the University of South Carolina.
- Completed at the request of the South Carolina General Assembly.

Evaluation on the Implementation and Expansion of CDEPP

- Based on December 1 student enrollment data for 2007-08, 3,756 children are served in public schools through the CDEPP program (an increase of 993 children from 2006-07). In private centers, 402 children are served (an increase of 93 children from 2006-07.)
- In the 37 plaintiff school districts, it is estimated that 2,256 eligible four-year-olds are not being served in a publicly-funded pre-K program.
- The SC Department of Education, which is responsible for CDEPP implementation in the public schools, is projected to expend \$17.1 million in FY 2007-08, 100 percent of the total appropriation.
- In the current fiscal year, the Office of First Steps is projected to expend \$2.5 million of their \$7.9 million appropriation, leaving a projected carry-forward of \$5.4 million.
- According to a facilities survey of CDEPP sites, public schools serving CDEPP children were at or near capacity. In contrast, 23 percent of private centers responding to the survey indicated they could serve an additional ten or more students.
- The analysis of the *Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third Edition (DIAL-3)* results in 2006-07 suggests that the eligibility criteria for enrollment in CDEPP (federal school lunch program and/or Medicaid-eligible) are identifying students developmentally at risk for later school failure.

SC four-year-olds in poverty served or not served, 2007-08 school year



Children in poverty: four-year-olds eligible for federal free- or reduced-price lunch programs and/or for Medicaid services

- Fifty-seven percent of the estimated population of four-year-olds eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch and/or for Medicaid statewide are being served by a federal, state, or local publicly-funded pre-K program.

Recommendations

Ten recommendations are included in the report for “improving the implementation and administration of CDEPP and for expanding the program statewide in the future.” The recommendations follow:

1. CDEPP should be continued in Fiscal Year 2008-09 and expanded beyond the plaintiff districts pending the availability of state funding. Expansion should be based on the student poverty level of the remaining districts.
2. The continued use of public and private providers is essential to the future expansion of the program.
3. The eligibility requirements should be amended to include not only children who qualify for the free and reduced-price federal lunch program and/or Medicaid but also children who score below the 25th percentile level on *DIAL-3* or a comparable and reliable screening assessment.
4. Continuation and expansion of CDEPP requires better data collection to improve the administrative and financial accountability of the program as well as the evaluation.
5. The General Assembly should require financial accountability controls similar to those in Georgia, which has a universal 4-K program, for all providers participating in CDEPP.
6. The current CDEPP teacher qualifications should be continued.
7. The current per-child reimbursement system should be amended prior to statewide implementation of the program. The reimbursement per child would reflect a higher per child rate for teachers who earn and maintain early childhood certification and four-year degrees beyond the minimal requirement of a two-year associate degree. The per-child rate should be based on a minimum class size, with the inclusion of waivers for centers in rural areas of the state.
8. Given the need to provide on-going technical assistance and professional development to CDEPP teachers, state administrators of the program should develop and publish an annual technical assistance and professional development plan that includes methods to directly evaluate implementers’ and participants’ professional support for CDEPP personnel.
9. At a minimum, no provider should receive funds to equip a new classroom unless the provider continuously enrolls a minimum of five CDEPP children in the school year.
10. Based on the initial implementation of CDEPP, one state agency or office should be accountable for the administration and implementation of CDEPP, or the legislature should appropriate funds to SCDE and OFS for administrative costs.

Voices

“The CDEPP program is worth all of our efforts. The benefits of a full-day program to poor youngsters are undeniable....We put a lot of faith in the research that affirms that what these children learn now will have long-term effects.”

-- *Dr. Mike Turner, Assistant Superintendent for Learning Services, Berkeley County School District*

“The children we serve gain so much academically.”

-- *Ms. Jacqueline Troy-Johnson, Director, Tory-Johnson Learning Center*

For additional information, contact the EOC at (803) 734-6148.

A complete copy of the “Evaluation Report on the Implementation and Expansion of the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)” can currently be found online at www.eoc.sc.gov.

A summary report on the pilot program, working documents, and previous reports can be found online at <http://www.eoc.sc.gov/evaluationsinprogress/fouryearoldkindergarten.htm>.